

Guide Dog Users of California
Ann Kysor, President
1519 P. Street #36
Sacramento, Ca. 95814

March 21, 2007

California Board of Guide Dogs for the Blind
1625 Market Blvd
Sacramento, Ca.

Dear Board,

Guide Dog Users of California, GDUC, the nation's largest state guide dog consumer organization, has long advocated for the maintenance and strengthening of the state's guide dog board. We have worked to improve guide dog access, strengthened pedestrian safety laws and supported and strengthened this board through legislation and the regulatory process. We have partnered with this board on numerous issues and events including "guide dog day" at the state capitol and the "instructor of the year" awards.

We have worked to assist the board with the sunset review process and have provided Advocacy on preventing the board from being eliminated during the California Performance Review and the Little Hoover Commission.

We are concerned however, with the inability of this board to address issues raised by our organization and guide dog schools regarding out of state guide dog schools, their payment of fees with respect to development of regulations and other questions that were raised concerning school licensing. Such concerns arose a few years ago when one of the smaller guide dog schools came perilously close to closing its doors due to lack of reserve funds which would have gone toward keeping an adequate number of licensed instructors on staff. In this regard, the Board provided little or no guidance to help that school through tough times.

We also have deep concerns with a pattern of practice with regards to hiring and consideration of blind and visually impaired applicants. This in part could account for erosion of support for the Board among blind and visually impaired consumers. There is a feeling that this board has become elitist and has lost track of its mission and who and what guide dog users are about.

Having said that, Guide Dog Users of California continues to support this board and will work with you to meet these challenges. This Board is, after all, the only state entity directly serving the blind community to which we are afforded such a great degree of access and input through direct communication.

Sincerely,

Ann Kysor
President
Guide Dog Users of California